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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe

Letter dated 16 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

The Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to transmit herewith the Political Message from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 26 August-4 September 2002) (see annex).

Since Luxembourg currently holds the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg requests the Secretary-General to have this document issued and distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under item 22 (d) of the agenda of the fifty-seventh session, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe", and as a document of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

(*Signed*) Hubert **Wurth**

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Annex to the letter dated 16 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Political Message from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 26 August-4 September 2002)

We, the Governments of the 44 member States of the Council of Europe,

welcoming the holding of the World Summit on Sustainable Development;

reaffirming our commitment to the principles agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and to the implementation of the goals contained in Agenda 21, the United Nations Millennium Declaration [and the Monterrey Consensus];

recognizing the role and responsibilities of Europe in promoting these principles, in achieving more balanced development, in enhancing education, health, culture and social development, and in strengthening good governance and democratic processes;

conscious of the need to adopt a balanced and mutually reinforcing social, environmental and economic approach to sustainable development, and having focused our work over the last decade on issues which, we hope, will benefit both present and future generations;

reaffirming the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as set out in the Council of Europe legal instruments (in particular the European Human Rights Convention and the Revised European Social Charter);

considering protection of the environment, eradication of poverty and economic and social development — including equality between women and men — central to sustainable development;

convinced that good governance including respect for all human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law as well as freedom of media and combating corruption are the foundation of just, democratic, sustainable and cohesive societies and essential ingredients for sustainable development in all countries worldwide;

aware that divided and unequal societies generate instability detrimental to both economic and social development, and having, therefore, adopted a strategy on social cohesion and the creation of sustainable societies as one of our major objectives;

resolved to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable members of society have equitable access to social rights and services;

willing, also, to ensure the long-term sustainability of health care, social security, and pensions systems, as well as to improve the ways in which we care for the younger and older generations in our societies;

underlining the need to protect our cultural and natural heritage;

hailing the work carried out by the Council of Europe to further the aims of the Rio de Janeiro conference (see Appendix) and in particular the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity and the Council of Europe Development Bank;

believing that, although the main focus of our activity is necessarily in the European context, it is essential also to work within the wider international community with other organizations and other regions to promote a human rights-based approach to sustainable development in order to combat poverty and strive for safer, healthier and fairer societies;

We, therefore, stand ready to cooperate with the United Nations and other international bodies and are resolved:

- to share our experience of developing and implementing standard-setting instruments in the relevant fields with other world regions, bearing in mind the specific situation and resources of each region;
- to continue to encourage the progressive integration of the goals of the 1992 Rio conference at national and international levels;
- to promote signature and ratification of relevant international and regional legal instruments and, in particular, the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- to examine the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit with a view to participating actively in international efforts to take forward the sustainable development agenda;
- to make the best possible use of the political institutions of the Council of Europe — the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe — in order to foster creative and fruitful political discussion with the citizens of our member States and thus enable them personally to make appropriate decisions to achieve sustainable development.

Appendix

The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) has led to the creation of a Council for the PEBLDS run jointly by the Council of Europe and the United Nations Environment Programme. PEBLDS represents a regional forum for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in Europe, based on the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity approach, while maintaining regional priorities set by the "Environment for Europe" ministerial process. Other projects developed in this field include a Water Charter, a model law and a Code of Conduct for coastal areas, and a Code of Practice for the introduction of biological and landscape diversity into the transport sector.

The application of the **"Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent"** will significantly facilitate Europe-wide cooperation aimed at creating a regionally-balanced and sustainable Europe.

Council of Europe environment-related conventions include:

- **the European Landscape Convention** under which public authorities should take appropriate measures at local regional, national and international levels to protect, manage and plan landscapes throughout Europe;
- **the European Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats** which is now in force in 45 European and African countries and is accompanied by a programme of activities adapted to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity;
- **the European Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law**;
- **the European Convention on Civil Liability for Damage resulting from Activities dangerous to the Environment.**

To counter corruption and organized crime, the Council of Europe has developed an arsenal of legal instruments which include:

- **the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption,**
- **the Civil Law Convention on Corruption,**
- **the Convention on the Laundering, Search, Seizure, and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime.**

Other Council of Europe activities include:

- the work of the **Parliamentary Assembly** on raising awareness about environmental and sustainable development issues such as the parliamentary round table to be held during the Johannesburg Summit to encourage Parliaments to promote sustainable development policies;
- the implementation, through the **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe**, of the "Think globally, act locally" concept with practical measures on the ground to strengthen governance for sustainable development;
- the work of the **European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity** (North-South Centre) to promote education for sustainable development and global citizenship and highlight the link between human

rights and environmental protection as an essential tool in the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development;

- the activities of the **Council of Europe Development Bank**, which is the Organization's financial instrument to promote solidarity. Its participation in the financing of social and environmental projects and its response to emergency situations helps improve living conditions and social cohesion in Europe.